

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 IO-10 SR-02 ORM-01 AID-05 FDRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8315

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 3939

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMG CO

REF: STATE 097854

1. PER PARA 6 REFTTEL, OUR THOUGHTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:
PROSPECTS OF PLACING SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF VIETNAM
REFUGEES IN COLOMBIA ARE NOT GOOD. COLOMBIA HAS A PERENNIAL
UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM WHICH HAS BECOME WORSE RECENTLY
DUE TO AN UNFAVORABLE ECONOMIC SITUATION. HEAVY AND UNCONTROLLED
MIGRATION FROM RURAL AREAS TO THE CITIES AND A HIGH POPULATION
GROWTH RATE ALSO PROVIDE THE GOC WITH SERIOUS SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

2. NEVERTHELESS, UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOC
MIGHT BE WILLING TO ACCEPT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF
VIETNAMESE. THIS WOULD DEPEND IN PART ON THE SPECIFIC SKILLS
AND OCCUPATIONS OF REFUGEES AND ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
IN RESETTLING THEM SO THAT THEY WOULD REASONABLY QUICKLY
BECOME AN ASSET, RATHER THAN CONSTITUTING AN ADDITIONAL SOCIAL
BURDEN.

3. IN ORDER TO IMPROVE OUR CHANCES OF PRODUCING A
POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM THE GOC, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD BE
ABLE TO PROVIDE AN INVENTORY OF THE SPECIFIC SKILLS AND
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OCCUPATIONS OF THOSE TO BE RESETTLED AND OF THE LEVEL

OF ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FROM THE US AND/OR INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. ONE POSSIBILITY LIES IN THE INTEREST OFTEN EXPRESSED BY GOC LEADERS IN SETTLING AND DEVELOPING POTENTIALLY RICH AGRICULTURAL AREAS IN SPARSELY SETTLED AREAS OF COLOMBIA, PARTICULARLY THE LLANOS IN THE EAST. IT MAY BE THAT THE GOC COULD BE MADE TO SEE THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THESE AREAS. THIS PLAN WOULD OF COURSE REQUIRE SETTLERS WITH RURAL, AGRICULTURAL SKILLS AS WELL AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE NECESSARY TO DEVELOP THE AREA, AND SUPPORT THE SETTLERS UNTIL THEY COULD BECOME PRODUCTIVE. IN GENERAL, A RURAL RESETTLEMENT APPROACH WOULD SEEM TO OFFER A BETTER POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS THAN ONE OF AN URBAN OR INDISCRIMINATE NATURE INVOLVING "WHITE COLLAR" SKILLS OF WHICH COLOMBIA POSSESSES A SURPLUS.

4. CHANCES FOR GETTING VARIOUS LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS QUICKLY AND SERIOUSLY ON QUESTION MAY ALSO BE ENHANCED IF, FOLLOWING VARIOUS DEMARCHES BEING MAKE PER REFTTEL, SECRETARY WOULD RAISE MATTER INDIVIDUALLY WITH KEY SELECTED FOREIGN MINISTERS AT UPCOMING OASGA. VAKY

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